

CHARLESTON MASSACRE
ANNIVERSARY

HON. JAMES E. CLYBURN

OF SOUTH CAROLINA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Monday, June 20, 2016

Mr. CLYBURN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to the victims and survivors of the Emanuel AME Church massacre in Charleston, South Carolina, last year. This was a heinous crime and the response of the families and community has been even more deeply impactful.

As a longtime AME congregant, a former resident of Charleston and longtime Representative of the Holy City in the U.S. House, I have a deep and abiding connection to that community. The victims of that horrific crime were my friends, neighbors and constituents. Their deaths pained me in profound and personal ways and the wounds to our community will take time to heal.

Mr. Speaker, on the night of June 17, 2015, my friend Reverend Clementa Pinckney left his service in the state senate to travel to Charleston to conduct his other kind of service, that of tending his flock at Mother Emanuel AME Church's regular Wednesday night Bible study. Rev. Pinckney was a tremendous leader in our community. Several weeks prior to that night, I had been with Rev. Pinckney at a service in North Charleston after the police shooting of an unarmed black man, Walter Scott. Rev. Pinckney's ministry at that event made a tremendous difference in defusing a very tense time and helped restore calm and allow the local authorities to exert justice on a most unjust situation.

Into that Bible study entered an uninvited outsider. Though he was a stranger, he was embraced by the worshippers who welcomed him into their weekly exploration of their faith. Yet that hate-filled young man shunned their neighborly embrace and conducted an act of violence so heinous the horror has been immeasurable.

Our nation has long had a common sense policy of background checks for prospective gun buyers. Unfortunately, that law has a glitch in it that allows a gun purchase after three business days, even if the background check is not complete, and tragically this shooter was able to purchase the gun due to an error in the paperwork. I have introduced legislation to close this Charleston Loophole in federal law once and for all. This common sense fix will ensure that background checks are completed before gun purchases are allowed.

I have also been pleased to support the request of the Medical University of South Carolina for federal funds to support the community, and last week the Department of Justice released a grant of more than \$3.5 million to support that work. I am pleased that the Department has awarded this grant to help MUSC and their partners, the City of Charleston and other local governments deal with the continuing needs in the community as we approach the first anniversary of this horrible chapter in our lives. I want to thank Attorney General Loretta Lynch, for expediting this award, and all of my colleagues in the South Carolina congressional delegation for joining me in supporting MUSC's request.

I have been extremely proud of the resilience and compassion shown by the people of

Charleston and South Carolina following the horrific attack at Mother Emanuel on June 17 last year. The survivors of the attack and the families of the victims have been an inspiration to their communities, our state and the whole nation. While the Charleston community has rallied together, as we approach the first anniversary of the Emanuel AME church massacre, we must stay vigilant and continue providing the proper support for the survivors and victims.

COMMEMORATING LGBTQ PRIDE
MONTH AND MOURNING THE
LIVES LOST IN THE ORLANDO
SLAUGHTER OF THE INNOCENTS

HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Monday, June 20, 2016

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to commemorate Pride Month 2016, which celebrates the remarkable achievements and progress made by LGBTQ Movement in extending the promise of America to LGBTQ persons over the last 47 years since the Stonewall Uprising on June 28, 1969 in the Greenwich Village section of New York City.

As hard as it is to believe, in 1969 homosexuality was still classified as a mental disorder by the American Psychiatric Association, gay men and lesbian women received almost universal moral condemnation from mainstream religions, and the most intimate expression of love and human connection between gay or lesbian persons was regarded as a criminal act punishable by imprisonment.

Today, marriage equality is the law of the land, the policy of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" has been rescinded, and LGBTQ persons today are serving the communities and our nation in every field of human endeavor, as full members of the American community.

Yet for all we have to celebrate and cheer, our happiness over the progress made to date is tempered by the heavy sadness we feel as we mourn the loss of 49 innocent persons who were killed and the 53 persons injured in the horrific mass shooting at Pulse, a popular and welcoming nightclub in Orlando, Florida.

This act of unspeakable horror, which was at once both a terrorist attack and a hate crime, represents the deadliest mass shooting in the American history and the nation's worst terror attack since 9/11.

The Pulse Nightclub in Orlando was a community gathering place offering fellowship, sanctuary, and refuge; a place where men and women met in fraternity and with the freedom to be their authentic selves.

Pulse was a safe space until June 12, 2016, when it was defiled by a gunman who used an AR-15 assault rifle to murder 49 people and wound 53 others.

Mr. Speaker, the struggle for equality and dignity for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBTQ) community is a struggle each of those individual communities have faced.

Pride Month was established to recognize the collective progress of love's triumph over hate.

Tempered by remorse, today we remember those who were in the struggle; we honor their memory and the resilience of the LGBTQ community.

The hearts and spirits of the fallen breathe new life into the valiant stars and stripes that continue to wave.

Let us remember the majestic words of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who said that "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

Notwithstanding the extraordinary progress we have made in the area of civil rights over the past several decades, LGBTQ Americans still face discrimination simply for being who they are.

There is still more work to do so long as it remains true that LGBTQ persons can get married on Saturday and fired on Monday.

Our commitment to combatting discrimination against the LGBTQ community must not stop at our borders; the fair treatment of all people must always be a cornerstone of American diplomacy.

We must make defending and promoting the human rights of LGBTQ individuals a priority in our engagements across the globe.

This commitment must be based upon the ideal that all people are created equal and deserve to be treated fairly with respect.

As Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stated in her International Human Rights Day Address in Geneva on December 6, 2011:

"Like being a woman, like being a racial, religious, tribal, or ethnic minority, being LGBT does not make you less human. And that is why gay rights are human rights, and human rights are gay rights."

Mr. Speaker, my congressional district is home to many remarkable members of the LGBTQ community who, day in and day out, work alongside their American brothers and sisters to make our country better in every sector of the economy including the arts, sciences, professions, and as teachers and service members defending our country.

Leaders such as Jason Black, Director of Public Health Services for Legacy Community Health Services, who has for decades been tireless in his efforts to remove the stigma associated with people living with HIV and AIDS and to increase the availability of care for marginalized communities.

Persons like Fran Watson, Esq. the first African American female President of Houston's GLBT Political Caucus, who works tirelessly to ensure that the LGBTQ community fully participates in our democracy and its interests are seriously considered.

Organizations such as Gamma Mu Phi and Delta Phi Upsilon Fraternities; Houston GLBT Political Caucus; Stonewall Democrats and Stonewall Young Democrats; Legacy Community Health; The Montrose Center; Houston Area Community Services; AIDS Foundation Houston; Houston Splash; and LGBTQ friendly organizations that work to empower Americans to live their truths.

Freedom is not free and the fight to realize the promise of America for every American continues.

I commend the courage of the millions quietly toiling in the vineyards to make this happen.

Mr. Speaker, today I am reminded of the classic ballad, "Stand By Me," by the legendary Ben E. King:

"When the night has come,
and the land is dark,
and the moon
is the only light we'll see;
No, I won't be afraid.